

to whom the notice or order was issued, by certified mail, or by any alternative means consistent with the rules governing service of a summons or complaint under rule 4 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, within 30 days of the issuance of the notice or order.

(1) If a copy of the proposed assessment and work sheet or the certified mail is tendered at the address of that person required under 30 CFR 816.11, or at any address at which that person is in fact located, and he or she refuses to accept delivery of or to collect such documents, the requirements of this paragraph shall be deemed to have been complied with upon such tender.

(2) Failure by the Office to serve any proposed assessment within 30 days shall not be grounds for dismissal of all or part of such assessment unless the person against whom the proposed penalty has been assessed—

(i) Proves actual prejudice as a result of the delay; and,

(ii) Makes a timely objection to the delay. An objection shall be timely only if made in the normal course of administrative review.

(c) Unless a conference has been requested, the Office shall review and reassess any penalty if necessary to consider facts which were not reasonably available on the date of issuance of the proposed assessment because of the length of the abatement period. The Office shall serve a copy of any such reassessment and of the worksheet showing the computation of the reassessment in the manner provided in paragraph (b), within 30 days after the date the violation is abated.

[47 FR 35640, Aug. 16, 1982, as amended at 56 FR 28446, June 20, 1991]

§ 845.18 Procedures for assessment conference.

(a) The Office shall arrange for a conference to review the proposed assessment or reassessment, upon written request of the person to whom the notice or order was issued, if the request is received within 30 days from the date the proposed assessment or reassessment is received.

(b)(1) The Office shall assign a conference officer to hold the assessment conference. The assessment conference

shall not be governed by section 554 of title 5 of the United States Code, regarding requirements for formal adjudicatory hearings. The assessment conference shall be held within 60 days from the date the conference request is received or the end of the abatement period, whichever is later: *Provided*, That a failure by the Office to hold such conference within 60 days shall not be grounds for dismissal of all or part of an assessment unless the person against whom the proposed penalty has been assessed proves actual prejudice as a result of the delay.

(2) The Office shall post notice of the time and place of the conference at the State or field office closest to the mine at least 5 days before the conference. Any person shall have a right to attend and participate in the conference.

(3) The conference officer shall consider all relevant information on the violation. Within 30 days after the conference is held, the conference officer shall either:

(i) Settle the issues, in which case a settlement agreement shall be prepared and signed by the conference officer on behalf of the Office and by the person assessed; or

(ii) Affirm, raise, lower, or vacate the penalty.

(4) An increase or reduction of a proposed civil penalty assessment of more than 25 percent and more than \$500 shall not be final and binding on the Secretary, until approved by the Director or his or her designee.

(c) The conference officer shall promptly serve the person assessed with a notice of his or her action in the manner provided in 30 CFR 845.17(b) and shall include a worksheet if the penalty has been raised or lowered. The reasons for the conference officer's action shall be fully documented in the file.

(d)(1) If a settlement agreement is entered into, the person assessed will be deemed to have waived all rights to further review of the violation or penalty in question, except as otherwise expressly provided for in the settlement agreement. The settlement agreement shall contain a clause to this effect.

(2) If full payment of the amount specified in the settlement agreement

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is not received by the Office within 30 days after the date of signing, the Office may enforce the agreement or rescind it and proceed according to paragraph (b)(3)(ii) within 30 days from the date of the rescission.

(e) The conference officer may terminate the conference when he or she determines that the issues cannot be resolved or that the person assessed is not diligently working toward resolution of the issues.

(f) At formal review proceedings under sections 518, 521(a)(4), and 525 of the Act, no evidence as to statements made or evidence produced by one party at a conference shall be introduced as evidence by another party or to impeach a witness.

[47 FR 35640, Aug. 16, 1982, as amended at 53 FR 3675, Feb. 8, 1988; 56 FR 10063, Mar. 8, 1991]

§ 845.19 Request for hearing.

(a) The person charged with the violation may contest the proposed penalty or the fact of the violation by submitting a petition and an amount equal to the proposed penalty or, if a conference has been held, the reassessed or affirmed penalty to the Office of Hearings and Appeals (to be held in escrow as provided in paragraph (b) of this section) within 30 days from receipt of the proposed assessment or reassessment or 30 days from the date of service of the conference officer's action, whichever is later. The fact of the violation may not be contested if it has been decided in a review proceeding commenced under 30 CFR 843.16.

(b) The Office of Hearings and Appeals shall transfer all funds submitted under paragraph (a) of this section to the Office, which shall hold them in escrow pending completion of the administrative and judicial review process, at which time it shall disburse them as provided in 30 CFR 845.20.

[47 FR 35640, Aug. 16, 1982, as amended at 56 FR 10063, Mar. 8, 1991]

§ 845.20 Final assessment and payment of penalty.

(a) If the person to whom a notice of violation or cessation order is issued fails to request a hearing as provided in § 845.19, the proposed assessment shall become a final order of the Secretary

and the penalty assessed shall become due and payable upon expiration of the time allowed to request a hearing.

(b) If any party requests judicial review of a final order of the Secretary, the proposed penalty shall continue to be held in escrow until completion of the review. Otherwise, subject to paragraph (c) of this section, the escrowed funds shall be transferred to the Office in payment of the penalty, and the escrow shall end.

(c) If the final decision in the administrative and judicial review results in an order reducing or eliminating the proposed penalty assessed under this part, the Office shall within 30 days of receipt of the order refund to the person assessed all or part of the escrowed amount, with interest from the date of payment into escrow to the date of the refund at the rate of 6 percent or at the prevailing Department of the Treasury rate, whichever is greater.

(d) If the review results in an order increasing the penalty, the person to whom the notice or order was issued shall pay the difference to the Office within 15 days after the order is mailed to such person.

§ 845.21 Use of civil penalties for reclamation.

(a) To the extent authorized in the applicable annual appropriations act or other relevant statute, the Director of OSMRE may utilize money collected by the United States pursuant to the assessment of civil penalties under section 518 of the Act for reclamation of lands adversely affected by coal mining practices after August 3, 1977, until such funds are expended.

(b) The Director may allocate funds at his discretion for reclamation projects on lands within any State or on Federal lands or Indian lands based on the following priorities:

(1) Emergency projects as defined in § 870.5 of this chapter;

(2) Reclamation projects which qualify as priority 1 under section 403 of the Act;

(3) Reclamation Projects which qualify as priority 2 under section 403 of the Act; and

(4) Reclamation of Federal bond forfeiture sites.